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ON RUSSIAN POET

N. TIKHONOV AND AZERBAIJANI CLASSICS NIZAMI AND S. VURGUN

SOBRE EL POETA RUSO N. TIKHONOV Y LOS CLÁSICOS DE AZERBAIYÁN NIZAMI Y S. VURGUN

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to analyze how the esteem for Azerbaijani literature is expressed in the body of work by N. S. Tikhonov, with a specific focus on his artistic impression of the literary classics Nizami and Vurgun. To accomplish this in the investigation it is delved into Tikhonov's writings to highlight the instances where he pays homage to the literature of the Caucasian country, examining the thematic and stylistic elements that underscore this connection. Despite the different times that separated them, N.S. Tikhonov extensively portrayed Vurghun as a national and classical poet of Soviet-Azerbaijan, emphasizing the profound connection with the renowned poet Nizami, although sometimes he wasn't explicit. In our opinion, Tikhonov recognized the enduring value of the poetry produced by these authors, and this poetic legacy, intertwined with the national identity, became a shared cultural asset, enriching the moral treasury of society beyond the historical precipice marked by both triumphs and tribulations. Thus, Tikhonov through his creative endeavors, reflects and contributes to the appreciation of Azerbaijani literary heritage.

Keywords: East literature, Azerbaijani poetic heritage.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es analizar cómo se expresa la estima por la literatura azerbaiyana en la obra de N. S. Tikhonov, con especial atención a su impresión artística de los clásicos literarios Nizami y Vurgun. Para lograrlo en la investigación se profundiza en los escritos de Tikhonov para resaltar las instancias en las que rinde homenaje a la literatura del país caucásico, examinando los elementos temáticos y estilísticos que subrayan esta conexión. A pesar de los diferentes tiempos que los separaron, N.S. Tikhonov retrató ampliamente a Vurghun como un poeta nacional y clásico del Azerbaiyán soviético, enfatizando la profunda conexión con el renombrado poeta Nizami, aunque a veces no fue explícito. En nuestra opinión, Tikhonov reconoció el valor perdurable de la poesía producida por estos autores, y este legado poético, entrelazado con la identidad nacional, se convirtió en un bien cultural compartido, enriqueciendo el tesoro moral de la sociedad más allá del precipicio histórico marcado por triunfos y tribulaciones. Así, Tikhonov, a través de sus esfuerzos creativos, refleja y contribuye a la apreciación del patrimonio literario azerbaiyano.

Palabras clave: Literatura oriental, herencia poética azerbaiyana.

INTRODUCTION

Nikolai Semenovich Tikhonov played a central role in Soviet literature throughout much of the 20th century. Born prior to the Russian Revolution, he witnessed the country's transformation under the communist regime, a facet profoundly reflected in his literary works. Commencing his career as a lyric poet, Tikhonov explored sentimental and existential themes through a symbolist style. However, as socialist realism became the official trend during the Stalinist era, Tikhonov embraced this orientation. Many of his later poems and novels praised revolutionary values and the construction of socialism in the USSR. Among his renowned works "Ballada o gvozdyakh" ("Ballad About Nails"), "Ballada o sinem pakete" ("Ballad of the Blue Parcel"), and "Dezertir" ("The Deserter") as well as a developed epistolary heritage (Tikhonov, 1980). Among the several awards he received, the most outstanding is the Lenin Prize in 1957 which elevated him to a position within the state-backed cultural elite (Narovchatov, 1976).

N.S. Tikhonov, who was known in the Soviet Russian poetry as a peace-seeker, had respect at Azerbaijan's literature, as well as to some of its poets and writers. One of these poets was our immortal poet, the leader of the Soviet Azerbaijan poetry Samad Vurghun, whose poetry and personality were highly appreciated by N.S. Tikhonov. In his diary named "Pages from My memories" Tikhonov dedicated a certain part of it to the unforgettable days and meetings in Azerbaijan. N.S. Tikhonov wrote: "S. Vurghun is an eternal symbol of life not only for me, but also for those who knew him. Vurghun's poems knew neither borders, nor directions. They flied to the North, South, East and West like birds. Vurghun's poems found their ways to the hearts of those who lived in Moscow, Leningrad and even abroad" (Tikhonov, 1964, p. 187).

N.S. Tikhonov had been to Azerbaijan many times. He was writing about Azerbaijan literature and culture with heart of a poet, critic and publicist. One of his writings was dedicated to our immortal poet Samad Vurghun's personality and creative work. And this way the result of the great Russian poet Tikhonov's sincere attitude for Azerbaijan and its great poet S. Vurghun. Professor S.Q. Asadullayev wrote about this relationship: "This "Caucasian Russian" was a great friend of Azerbaijani people an Azerbaijan's literature and made friends with S. Vurghun personally" (Asadullayev, 2000, p. 30). We mentioned in detail about N. Tikhonov's friendship with S. Vurgun in our previous article (Kazimov, 2018).

N. Tikhonov wrote about Vurghun as a national poet, as a classical poet of Soviet-Azerbaijan poetry and as a person. But it is interesting that whenever he wrote about Vurghun, Tikhonov connected him with Nizami. Nizami Ganjavi requires no introduction. He stands as one of the most celebrated poets in medieval Persian literature, renowned for his epic poems with romantic themes that garnered significant influence across the Muslim world. Born around the year 1141 in Ganja, present-day Azerbaijan, the details of his life are shrouded in an air of mystery. However, his works have endured through the ages, globally esteemed for their brilliance and ahead-of-his-time insights. His epic poems weave tales of love intertwined with the adventures of legendary heroes, drawing inspiration from folklore fables. All of these are regarded as masterpieces of narrative poetry, showcasing Nizami's mastery in the use of rhyme, rhythm, and rhetorical devices. Beyond his artistic prowess, Nizami delved deeply into humanistic themes that transcend borders, such as the redeeming power of love, wisdom versus ignorance, and the quest for the meaning of life. The universality of his ideas and the sublime beauty of his poetic style have allowed his legacy to endure for centuries, influencing not only later Turkish and Persian literature but also European poets. Undoubtedly, he is considered one of the most significant writers of all time within his cultural context (Shukurova, 2022).

These genius poets positively impacted Tikhonov's creative mind. However, despite eight centuries separated two poets from one another both of these epochs were distinguished by their negative sides, such as bloody wars, political repressions. Both the positive and negative sides of these centuries have become part of history. But over this historical precipice a poetic grandeur sparkles, profound philosophy and humane poetry stands. This poetry showed the right direction to the future generation of poets becomes national property and enriches its moral treasury. This way wile analyzing the essays written by the Russian poet about the Azerbaijani thinker Nizami, it has been noted that (Kazimov, 2015, p. 1560): "The hero of the storis of Tikhonov accepted the image of Leyli as a symbol of sublime love, freedom of the human spirit". In accordance with the foregoing, the objective of this work is to briefly analyze how the respect for Azerbaijani literature is manifested in the oeuvre of N. S. Tikhonov, emphasizing his artistic relationship with the classics Nizami and Vurgun.

DEVELOPMENT

Nizami and Vurghun's literary activity, as an example of Azerbaijani poetic peaks, thrived from one root: a nation's talent and spirit. Nowadays, the creative works of these two geniuses are not only considered as different historical stages of the literary process but also as two peaks that are bound together and complement one another.

Being a respected figure in Soviet poetry Tikhonov accepted Nizami's and Vurghun's creative works this way, too. This can be easily seen when Tikhonov wrote about Vurghun, consistently establishing connections between Vurghun's personality and poetry and that of Nizami, or when he juxtaposed their poetic traditions from a historical predecessor standpoint (Kazimov et al., 2016, p. 558). Because of that, today bronze monuments of these two great poets decorate Baku's different squares.

In this regard, N.Tikhonov said: "It's strange for me to think about Vurghun's monument which is standing in the center of a big park in front of a square. He looks with bronze eyes, and his bronze hands rest on his bronze chest. Underneath his feet there are written words expressing his love for his motherland. And this monument was sculptured by F. Abdurrahmanbayov who as well sculptured Nizami's monument. Ages and poets meet this way". As it was mentioned above, Tikhonov said these words remembering the time he had spent during Nizami's jubilee. In that article, Tikhonov elaborates on the journey he undertook to various regions of Azerbaijan alongside Vurghun and A. Fadeyev.

Talking about the ceremonial jubilee highly pleased, Tikhonov called it a national holiday, a holiday of poetry and culture. He wrote: "Great Nizami's holiday was just over, but the ceremonial jubilee's lively pictures were still in our thought. In Azerbaijan, young people remember Nizami's time and verses were being recited about people who are in love". Among the participants and guests Tikhonov held two people apart in his mind. One of them was Alexander Fadeyev whom Tikhonov called "main guest", and the other one was Fadeyev's close friend and our prominent poet Samad Vurghun whom Tikhonov called "host of the celebration". N. Tikhonov considered: "Without any doubt, Vurghun was a national poet, and he got the honor of introducing his master to the guests and the nation". N.Tikhonov starts the story by describing the close friendship of two persons in ways that are accepted in Oriental poetry. Having great respect for poetry, Azeri people respected Fadeyev too. Tikhonov wrote: "He felt it, that's why he was pleased. He was tall, very quick and smiled heartily. He looked brave; he would look very nice if he dressed like Circassian. When Fadeyev was young, he wore a black shirt, and a Caucasian silver belt. And he didn't do it in vain. His white hair sparked, and his smile was tender and jingly. He smiled all the time".

Understanding Vurghun's great capability of an innovator, Tikhonov has created work in the context of Azerbaijan's poetic traditions. He describes Vurghun's poetic work by means of the latter's own poem (Tikhonov, 1979, p. 19):

Now nature every breath is here.
And also, the name of everybody and everything.
Neither a poet nor an inhabitant of hand.
Will exchange a handful of land.

N. Tikhonov wrote: "It's not an easy thing to find way into people's hearts in order to be famous in Azerbaijan, land of poets where such great poets as Nizami, Khagani, Vagif and others are highly appreciated and respected. Vurghun has shared all the griefs and troubles of his nation and gone through the revolutionary way that this people went. That's he had the right to say these words in a loud voice in one of his very well-known poems (Tikhonov, 1979, p. 27):

Who knows not you are mine,
You are my nest, my shrine,
My native land ever shines,
You are my heart; I am your son,
Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan.

So, this way Tikhonov opens the secret of Vurghun's innovation. Tikhonov describes Vurghun in a number of situations during their travels of different regions of Azerbaijan. He describes him as a poet, citizen, theorist, and a closefriend of hard – working country people, as a wise and maddest man, passionate hunter and as a person who loves his motherland endlessly. Tikhonov created his character very sincerely, because he discovered all those qualities of Vurghun in real life experience. And their friendship became still stronger over the years that went by. After Vurghun died Tikhonov recalled all his memories with him with pain on heart. N.S.Tikhonov created a real character of a hunter remembering the times when he went hunting with Vurghun: "When talking about my friendship with them I couldn't have helped mentioning the energy that they got if I didn't see them wear like hunters from head to feet, stepping forward without getting tired and leading the others behind them".

N.Tikhonov especially emphasizes Vurghun's ideas about "poetic character in poetry", "about national roots in literature" and "about great poetic heroes". In his essay "Roads – footsteps" Tikhonov highly praises Azerbaijan's wonderful nature – its forests, rivers, Shamakhy's fields and mountains, Goychay, Ganja, Mingachevir, Shaki, Lankaran and the beauty of the river Kur. This way N.Tikhonov has created Vurghun's character that glorified Azerbaijan's fascinating nature and he proves his points by his friend's own poem (Tikhonov, 1979, p. 22):

Forest! Forest! You are indeed

Spring in summer and winter too.

You are what stop the wind

How hind you are!

N.Tikhonov also describes Vurghun as a unique person having great sense of humor and as a person being able to challenge his companion by recalling forgotten historical facts. "Vurghun is able to create a friendly atmosphere among his friends with these qualities" – Tikhonov says. N.Tikhonov describes a scene about himself, S. Vurghun, A. Fadeyev and Georgian poet Sandro Shanshiashvili:

"Samad Vurghun shouts in a loud voice looking with fake anger:

Sandro, give back the gate!

Sandro understood the joke very well, but without imagining the real meaning of this joke he continued playing Samad's tricky game in a very professional way.

- Which gate shall I give back?! I don't have a gate. If you don't believe me, then go to the balcony and see it for yourself.

- If I had a gate, I'd have given it to you right away! What should I do? Where should I get it from?

- Samad answered swinging around spit like a sword:

- Give back the gate!

- Which gate do you mean, Samad?

- I mean the gate of Ganja. You came and took the gate away when there was a terrible earthquake, and everything was destroyed.

- I haven't any gate away, my dear. I swear, I haven't. When has this happened?

- Samad laughed for Sandro's being confused and answered:

- Two hundred years ago.

Tikhonov's writings about Vurghun have attracted a number of critics' attention such as S. Asadullayev, M. Arif, K. Hasanov and so on. M. Arif wrote an article called "Nikolay Tikhonov" where he mentioned the two poets' friendship. "A lot of speeches have been delivered and a lot of articles written about S. Vurghun. But his pen-friend Tikhonov's article occupies a special place among the articles written. There's a special power in this article. His extraordinary ability of understanding Vurghun's poems, and ability of analyzing sensitively astonished even those who knew him from his childhood and those who research his life and work" (Arif, 1967, p. 348). In addition, Kamal Hasanov, researcher and scientist emphasizes Tikhonov's appreciation of S. Vurghun: "S. Vurghun and Tikhonov had been friends for long years. The former's death was loss for him. Tikhonov dedicated many articles to Vurghun and considered him to be the disciple of Nizami, Fuzuli, Akhundov" (Hasanov, 1984, p. 31).

In the autumn of 1975, "Soviet Literature Days" were conducted in Azerbaijan, signifying a crucial event for fostering intercultural relationships. Tikhonov actively engaged in this occasion, delivering speeches before audiences in Baku and Lankaran. Notably, he dedicated a series of poems to the nature and people of Azerbaijan. As Tikhonov traversed the country and immersed himself in its culture, he developed a profound appreciation for the Azerbaijani nation, its culture, and literature. During the "Literature Days" in Baku, the house museum of S. Vurghun was inaugurated. Tikhonov participated in the opening ceremony, extending congratulations on behalf of Soviet poets and deeming it a "significant event for our poetry." Emphasizing the enduring affection of the nation for S. Vurghun, he expressed, "We are delighted to be the first to enter the poet's inspirational space. We hold deep respect for a nation that cherishes its poet and safeguards his memories" (Tikhonov, 1978, pp. 29-30).

In the memoirs dedicated to S. Vurghun's 70th anniversary, Tikhonov highlighted Vurghun as "the classical poet of Soviet Azerbaijan poetry," emphasizing his role as "one of the prominent founders of the poetry school in Azerbaijan" and as "a person possessing a great heart and brave soul." Tikhonov characterized Vurghun's creative contributions, stating, "Samad Vurghun has been the leader of Soviet Azerbaijan poetry, a great playwright, a talented theorist, and the organizer of the literary process. He followed the traditions laid down by his genius predecessors and immortal masters such as Nizami, Fuzuli,

and Akhundov, creating a brilliant example of poetry" (Tikhonov, 1981, p. 74). Additionally, Tikhonov dedicated several poems to S. Vurghun. In the poem titled "I Remembered Samad Vurghun" and the essay named "Roads-Footsteps," Tikhonov expressed his sentiments in a poetic manner. The poem is divided into two parts, with the first part reminiscing about personal encounters, meetings, and hunting experiences with Vurghun. The second part reflects on a meeting in front of a bronze monument in the center of Baku. This particular poem is included in the curriculum for Russian lessons in secondary schools, attesting to its enduring impact.

Moreover, following his participation in Nizami's 800th anniversary celebration, Tikhonov penned an article titled "Roads, Footsteps," dedicated to Samad Vurghun, wherein he spiritually linked these two eminent figures. Crafting a distinctive portrait of Vurghun, Tikhonov took pride in highlighting Vurghun as the first to write about a thinker of Nizami's caliber. Tikhonov expressed, "Samad's thick eyebrows, his eagle-looking eyes, facial expressions betokened his great strength and fortitude. Who could be the first to write about Nizami other than him?! Wasn't it Vurghun who wrote very concisely about the bases of his creative work himself?! He considered Nizami to be his master" (Tikhonov, 1979, pp. 8-9). Then, as have been highlighted, Nikolay Tikhonov held Vurghun's personality and creative contributions in high regard, a sentiment stemming from their close friendship and shared methods of writing. In discussing the principles of romantic poetry, S. Vurghun stated, "A romantic poet aggravates. He describes the positive beginnings of life consciously, often expresses unusualness, and sometimes addresses exceptional characters and events" (Shoshin, 1969, p. 247).

These words have been taken from V. Soshin book dedicated to Tikhonov's creative work. According to it, we can say that Tikhonov learned the secrets of romantic poetic poetry from S. Vurghun as the other poets of other nationalities did. Other researcher Y. Knipovich wrote that Tikhonov is one of those who brought "new Oriental characters to Occidental literature, avoiding the traditional Eastern and Western conflict in these works" (Knipovich, 1956, p. 16). Researching these facts, we can say that knowing of the features of national poetry helped the Russian poet Tikhonov to talk about Central Asian, Precaucasian and other Eastern nations, as well as Azerbaijani one.

CONCLUSIONS

The literary works of Samad Vurghun and Nizami Ganjavi exhibit significant parallels, unveiling a poetic connection that was acknowledged by the Soviet writer Nikolai Semenovich Tikhonov. Despite belonging to different epochs and cultural contexts, both poets delved into similar themes, blending epic and romantic elements within their writings. Vurghun and Nizami undertook a profound exploration of love, courage, and the quest for meaning in their works, a thematic convergence evident in both their lyrical and narrative poetry. Tikhonov noticed Nizami's influence on Vurghun, acknowledging Vurghun's deep reverence for the medieval Persian poet as his literary mentor. Beyond their friendship, Tikhonov praised Vurghun's skill in adhering to the literary traditions established by Nizami, considering him a brilliant exemplar of poetry that reflected the foundations laid by his master. Vurghun's admiration for Nizami manifested in literary events dedicated to the latter and in the inauguration of the S. Vurghun museum during the "Soviet Literature Days" in Azerbaijan, emphasizing the spiritual connection between these two poets. The recurrent theme in Tikhonov's writings and speeches regarding the literary parallels between Vurghun and Nizami underscored their interconnectedness.

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